

SALT OF THE EARTH

Gateway Pregnancy Center Ministry Is a Labor of Love

By RACHEL MARI

Gateway Pregnancy Center is not just devoted to saving babies; it is even more passionate about winning souls for Christ.

Opportunities to minister the Gospel to women in need abound at Gateway Pregnancy Centers in Irvington and Elizabeth, NJ. The focus is on sharing Christ in a non-judgmental way and being up-front about the fact that they do not perform abortions or provide birth control. The sign on the door says, "Gateway is not a medical facility, but a Christian ministry for all people."

"Satan would love us to be angry at the women or only be baby savers," said Rev. Dean Gavaris, Executive Director of Gateway. "But we have to be careful to keep the focus that God has given us. We have to transmit God's best to these people."

Rev. Gavaris and workers at Gateway provide the Gospel first, then help women carry their babies to term by giving them emotional support and practical assistance. They provide pregnancy tests, baby items, education on abortion alternatives and accurate abortion information, abstinence education, medical and housing referrals, parenting counseling, and men's support to those already pregnant or considering abortion. Counseling is also given to women that have already had an abortion.

The goal is to create awareness of pregnant women's needs and "the fact that abortion only compounds human need, rather

"People have to decide what is important to God and then go do it. We're soaking up all of this learning and we're not volunteering three hours a week."

than resolving it." Gateway's ultrasound ministry plays a major role in clients choosing to keep their babies. Statistics show that 90% of women who see an ultrasound of their child carry the pregnancy to term.

Gateway was started in 1985 as Archway Pregnancy Center in Elizabeth, NJ by Evangel Church (Scotch Plains, NJ) and the Church of Grace and Peace (Cranford, NJ). In 1990, Gateway Pregnancy Center was opened in Irvington, NJ. Both facilities merged under the name of Gateway Pregnancy Centers in 1998. Since its inception in 1985, Gateway has seen 18,247 women; 1,558 babies have been born; and 868 women have come to Christ.

After years in this ministry, Gavaris said the Church may be missing its focus in regards to abortion. "We're trying to reform a person's behavior and we're not focused on their transformation...We've danced a dance to Satan. He has given us the ground rules: instead of responding with Scripture, we respond with statements...We need to get out of the way and let God do His thing."

He urges Christians to get involved and invest their time and their hearts. "It's a lot easier to give our money than to give ourselves," said Gavaris. "People have to decide



left: Rev. Dean Gavaris and Xavier; right: Diane, a mom who was helped by Gateway Pregnancy Center, and her baby, Messiah

what is important to God and then go do it. We're soaking up all of this learning and we're not volunteering three hours a week."

Rev. Gavaris wants believers to see ministries like Gateway as an extension of the Church. "Other pro-life advocates don't see it as an arm of the Church," Gavaris stated. "[But] it is acts of compassion that lead others to Christ."

"It's hard seeing the Church involved in learning, events, and personal pleasure, more than in seeing the need. I think people are bored and they don't see the excitement of Christianity. We should see Christianity as struggle instead of personal gain."

"It's not a question of time. People have the time. The Church is lukewarm. The

doctrine is pretty straight, but it's like, so what? Worship involves service. A lot of people are not speaking up for the Lord. People are not getting that there's a whole lot more to Christianity. Without the Word, prayer, and service, people are not growing.

"Nothing is more important than seeing people come to Christ."

Gateway Pregnancy Center is a non-profit educational social service and is supported by churches and individuals through donations. Its annual Stewardship Banquet is held Thurs., Oct. 27, 7-9 p.m. at Calvary Tabernacle's Harvest Training Center, 69 Myrtle St., Cranford, NJ. Cost: \$20 per person. To contact this ministry, call (973) 399-8378, email dean@gateway.org, or visit www.gateway.org.